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ABSTRACT

A review of communication models and research reveals four areas of communications skill: listening, empathy, non-verbal communication, and expressive abilities. Models of listening behavior suggest that, rather than being a passive activity, listening involves sorting stimuli and encoding messages, analyzing listener needs, and assessing speaker attitudes and internal states. According to current literature, empathy is the accurate perception of other people's feelings, reactions, or attitudes. Nonverbal communication, while difficult to record and evaluate, appears to be a group of interrelated skills dependent on the channel used--for example, voice or gesture. Expressive ability, defined by speech, rhetoric and communication course books, includes skills ranging from organizing to delivering effective messages. Continued assessment of communication skills within naturalistic settings is needed. (MM)

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RESEARCH REPORT

THE SEARCH FOR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Leonard L. Baird

March 1983

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The Search for Communication Skills

Leonard L. Baird

November, 1982

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Abstract

This review attempts to identify generic competencies in communication that may be amenable to assessment. Concentrating on research based literature, the review examines the models, methods, and research reviews that have been used to study communication. From these sources four areas of skill were identified: listening, empathy, non-verbal communication, and expressive abilities. The research relating to the definitions of subskills within these areas is discussed, as well as the difficulties in assessing the skills.

A concern since ancient times, communication emerged as a separate topic of scholarly and scientific study only in the twentieth century. Today, however, the very diversity of the approaches to the study of communication makes a single definition difficult. Communication has been defined in many ways for many purposes. The psychiatrist Jurgen Ruesch has identified 40 different disciplinary approaches to communication, including the architectural, anthropological, psychological, and political. And, as noted by Gordon (1979):

> "...if such informal communications as sexual attraction and play behavior are included, there exist at least 50 modes of interpersonal communication that draw on dozens of discrete intellectual disciplines and analytic approaches. Communication may therefore be analyzed in at least 50 different ways.... In short, at present, a communication expert is likely to be oriented to any of a number of disciplines in a field of inquiry that has, as yet, neither drawn for itself a conclusive roster of subject matter nor agreed-upon specific methodologies of analysis." (p. 1005)

Obviously, the task of this review, identifying generic competencies in communication, is complicated by this diversity. However, this very diversity may strengthen the ultimate outcome. If the same factors appear when communication is analyzed from many perspectives, those factors are probably important and robust ones. However, which perspectives deserve the closest examination?

The approach taken here is to examine the literatures that appear to have most comprehensively examined the process of communication and which have the most careful research behind them. Therefore, this review begins with a review of the formal models of the communication process. Models are a useful place to begin since they must attempt to include the critical variables in communication and explicitly outline their interactions. The review then proceeds to examine the methods used to study communication and to provide evidence for various ideas about communication. The research literature and

earlier reviews that have sought dimensions of communication skill are examined next. From these sources--models, methods, and research literature--four areas of skill are proposed. Obviously it would be impossible to examine all the literature on communication; this review must, therefore, be selective. However, in the opinion of the writer, the research examined appeared to be well-conducted, and the dimensions fairly robust, although no claim is made that they encompass all aspects of communication.

Models of the Communication Process

It is helpful to consider models of the communication process in order to identify critical variables and to appreciate the complexity of human communication. One of the earliest conceptions was developed by Lasswell (1936) who was primarily interested in the political process. According to Lasswell, communication consists of:

Who communicates
What to
Whom through
Which Channel with
What Effect.

The emphasis in this model is on persuasion, and a great deal of subsequent work has also focused on persuasion, especially in political opinions. The subjects studied include attitude change, social influence and propaganda, and the writers come from backgrounds in political science, social psychology, and sociology. Lasswell's own interests turned to the analysis of propaganda and the ways power and communication are used by the elite to further their goals and

control the masses. The important point here is that his model emphasizes the outcomes of communication and how those outcomes are best reached.

A second model comes from an entirely different area, physical or electronic communication, although it has been widely used in describing human communication. Shannon and Weaver (1949) proposed the following model.

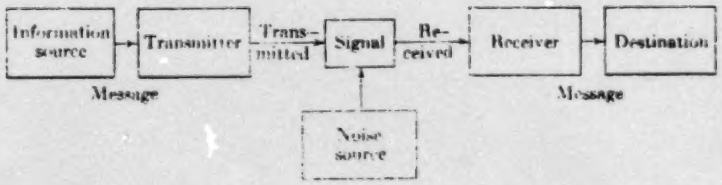

Figure 1. Shannon-Weaver model of communication. (From Claude E Shannon and Warren Weaver. *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1949, p. 98.)

In human communication, the brain is the information source, the voice the transmitter, sound waves the signal, the ear the receiver, and the receiving person's brain the destination of the message. The message that is intended and transmitted may, for various reasons, be different from the message that is received. The goal of communication is to increase the fidelity of the communication: that is, the degree to which the intended message is received without distortion. To explain this process, the model introduces the concepts of noise, redundancy, and entropy. Noise either adds or omits symbols in the communication chain thereby causing a discrepancy between the intended message and the received message. There are two types of noise: mechanical and semantic. Mechanical

noise is relatively simple, as when conversation is disrupted by a passing train. Semantic noise exists when people misunderstand each other for any reason.

In order to reduce semantic noise, people use the device of redundancy, or the duplication of information in their messages. The English language is highly redundant, with verbs, tenses, articles, and modifiers all providing indicators of the information in sentences. In addition, most speakers convey multiple clues to their meaning as they speak, so that their intention is fairly clear. (Some of these devices have been analyzed by discourse analysis, to be described later.) Redundancy has been the subject of information theory, especially in electronics where channel capacity has been closely studied.

Many linguistic devices are used to reduce entropy, which can be viewed as the degree of uncertainty or randomness in a message. Redundancy is one of these: as redundancy increases, entropy decreases. Although we do not usually think of redundancy as the mark of a good communicator, it often is, in fact. For example, consider part of one of the great speeches of modern times:

> "We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing strength and confidence in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender..."

Since messages are usually received less coherently than they were transmitted, the communicator must use every device available to decrease entropy.

Although this model may seem somewhat mechanical, it helps to illuminate many aspects of the communication process. The information source needs to have correct information to communicate. The chances are greater that the information is correct if the source's information resources--the person's knowledge and

understanding--are greater. However, as anyone who has spent time in classrooms knows, sheer knowledge is not enough for effective communication. The person's "transmission" capacity must be high. In the language of the model, the communicator must choose the appropriate message and the most effective channel or means of conveying the message so that it can be received with the highest degree of fidelity. The communicator must be aware of possible sources of "noise" that may distort the communication. The communicator must also be aware of the "channel capacity" of the receiver of the message--i.e., the listener's frame of reference, ability to comprehend the message, and special decoding problems.

Although not elaborated directly by Shannon, the limited capacity of the receiver to receive messages leads to various problems. One of these problems that has received a great deal of attention is information overload, which exists when too much information is included in a message for the receiver to decode it properly. (This is a frequent problem within organizations [Katz & Kahn, 1966].) The consequences of information input overload as analyzed by Miller (1960) include (1) omission, failing to process some of the information; (2) error, or processing information incorrectly; (3) stacking, or delaying processing during peak periods of information input, with the intent of catching up during a slow period of input; (4) filtering, or attending to only part of the information, and ignoring other information, according to some scheme of priorities; (5) approximation, or widening the categories of discrimination; (6) using multiple channels or parallel channels; and (7) escaping from the task. Obviously, these methods can be adaptive or maladaptive for the receiver.

Like the communicator who initiates the message, the receiver needs to have sufficient information and understanding to be able to comprehend the message. The receiver also needs to choose the appropriate channel to receive the message,

to be aware of possible sources of noise, and to be aware of the communicator's frame of reference, ability to articulate the message, and special encoding problems. All of these factors affect the fidelity or quality of communication.

Wendell Johnson (1951) proposed another model, based on his clinical work on communication disorders. As shown in Figure 2, an individual can respond to only a small number of stimuli from the environment (1). From these possible stimuli, the individual chooses to attend to only a few (2). At (3), the individual symbolizes his or her responses to the stimuli in words, as filtered through his or her inner states as when Ms. Jones thinks, for example, "It's a beautiful morning." This sentence is a result of Ms. Jones projections, not a statement describing the day. In (4), the individual's drives, goals, and values come into play. At (5), the individual formulates the final version of what is said, depending on his or her knowledge, vocabulary, and purpose. Cultural and personal backgrounds influence what is said at (5). The receiver of the message likewise chooses certain aspects of the message to attend to, responds to what he or she "hears," works the message through a system of drives, goals, and values, and formulates a final comprehension of the message dependent on his or her knowledge, vocabulary, and purpose. The loops at the bottom of Figure 2 show an important concept--the feedback from each speaker to the other. Obviously, this model emphasizes the subjective nature of language and the possible barriers and breakdowns in communication. It also emphasizes the importance of the receiver being aware of both the limitations of his or her own capacity to communicate and of the listener's limited capacity to receive the communication. Attention to feedback from the listener and the capacity to interpret it are consequently quite important for good communication. Although not specifically named in the Johnson model, empathy and listening skills are important in this framework.

Key:
1 = Source of sensory stimulation external to the sensory organs of Mr. A
2 = Sensory stimulation stage
3 = Preverbal neurophysiological stage
4 = Individual's symbolic system
5 = Verbal response patterns
1′ = Sound waves between Mr. A and Mr B
2′ to 1″ = These are parallel to the key for Mr. A

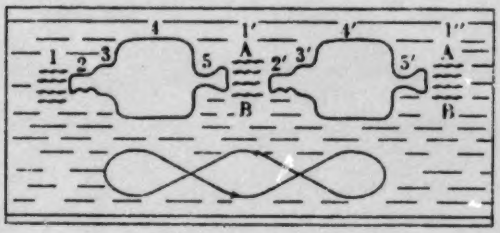

Figure 2. Johnson model of face-to-face communication. (From Wendell Johnson, "The Spoken Word and the Great Unsaid." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 32 (1951): 421.)

Westley and MacLean (1957) proposed a "conceptual model of communication research" which bears many similarities to the Johnson model. Its major advance is that it extends the idea of communication to more than two communicators. Thus, a message from person A can be relayed through person B to person C. Person B may also have knowledge and interpretations of the same content in the message from person A. Thus, the original message may be reinterpreted and restated by person B to person C. Feedback to person A can come from both person B and person C. This model emphasizes the role of multiple sources of information, the filtering of messages, and multiple messages. Although not specifically detailed in the model, such skills as being willing to communicate, behavioral flexibility, and having methods for managing or controlling the interaction are suggested by the structure of the model.

Berlo (1960) proposed a SMCR (Source-Message-Channel-Receiver) model. The source includes five factors that can influence the quality of communication: (1) communication skills, (2) attitudes, (3) level of knowledge, (4) position within a social system, and (5) culture. Berlo has little to say about communication skills, simply noting that there are writing and speaking skills. However, Berlo points out that communication effectiveness is influenced by attitudes toward oneself, toward the subject matter of the message, and toward the receiver. Poor or negative attitudes toward any of these often lead to ineffective communication. Berlo made an obvious but often overlooked point when he emphasized the importance of knowledge. Senders cannot communicate effectively if they do not know their topic reasonably well. Berlo makes another important point by emphasizing the importance of social roles and the cultural context. Obviously, it makes a great deal of difference to the receiver whether a statement is made by the President of the United States, a neighbor, or a convicted criminal.

The message component of the model includes the factors of structure, elements, message code, and message treatment. These factors can also influence communication effectiveness. A message that is structured is well organized, and has a natural sequence. The elements are the main points of information to be made. The message code is the code used to communicate. The message treatment is how the source delivers the content of the message and treats the code. For example, the source may repeat, summarize, or select different pieces of information. In this model, communication is more effective when the sender has the elements of the message well in mind, structures the message so its elements fit into a comprehensible pattern, chooses the proper message code, and selects a message treatment that will best convey his or her purpose to the receiver.

Berlo's "channels" are described simply by a listing of the senses by which a message can conceivably be sent and received: seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting. Although the list is not very helpful in analyzing communication, it may be useful in reminding us that all our senses are involved in communication.

Finally, the receiver consists of the same factors as the source: communication skills, attitudes, knowledge, the social system, and culture. The only difference is that the primary communication skills for the receiver are listening and reading. The major advantages of the Berlo model are (1) its explication of the many complex and interacting influences on communication; (2) its emphasis on the importance of knowledge in both the sender's and receiver's communication competence; and (3) its emphasis on the significance of social roles and the surrounding culture. It also touches on another topic, nonverbal communication. Its most critical weakness is the omission of feedback.

Schramm (1955) developed a series of models based on his study of mass communication. They are basically like the Shannon-Weaver model, with the addition of the idea of feedback. They represent each individual as both a sender and receiver, and suggest that each consists of a decoder, an interpreter, and an encoder. In these models, the source's capacity to encode and the receiver's capacity to decode are limited by their respective fields of experience.

Ross (1965) presented a model that includes the elements of earlier models. The sender and receiver select and sort the sensations presented to them. The sender develops an idea which is transmitted through a channel medium. The receiver reconstructs the idea after recording the message. Then the receiver produces internal and external reactions to the message to provide feedback. Ross' chief contribution is his emphasis on the climate situation, which consists of the sender's and the receiver's respective states of knowledge of the idea involved in the communication, their past experience with the idea, and their feelings, attitudes and emotions at the time the idea is transmitted. According to this model, communication should be more effective when the sender and receiver are aware of each other's feelings, attitudes, and emotions. Thus the model suggests the importance of empathy. The ability and willingness to provide useful feedback and to accept it suggest the importance of listening skills, freedom from speech anxiety, openness, and skills in providing and understanding nonverbal behavior.

Another source of models is the very large body of research and thinking that has been directed at the idea of <u>influence</u>. Most of this research has been concerned with social psychology, and, more specifically, with attitude change (Eagly & Himmelfarb, 1978). A great deal of study has been devoted to such topics as source credibility, sequence in the presentation of arguments (Roberts

& Bachen, 1981), balance in attitudes (Cialdini, Petty, & Cacioppo, 1981), and person perception (Worchel & Cooper, 1979). Most of this research provides technical data about the most effective ways of influencing the receiver of a message. Some researchers point out that people involved in interactions often seek to be influenced as well as to influence. The strengths of this research are its emphasis on the sources of credibility, the factors in maintaining credibility, the evidence for the changeable nature of attitudes, the need for cognitive consistency among attitudes, and the outcomes of mass communication, such as presidential elections.

In contrast to the previous models, which generally emphasize the communication of information or the persuasion and influence of others, there are a variety of perspectives which emphasize the nonpersuasive or humanistic aspects of communication. These perspectives, which examine the affirming, group-enhancing, reassuring, and authenticity functions of communication, have been summarized by Kirkpatrick (1981).

One of the major qualitative differences between the "influence" and the "humanistic" approaches is the latter's expansion of the functions of communication. The "influence" approach has a long history, albeit with the sole intention of persuading others to one's view. The sophists of classical Greece, so despised by Plato, were the favorites of Rome, where political influence was so important. For example, Pliny the Younger describes a rhetorician, Isaesus, as follows:

> "He suggests several subjects for discussion, allows his audience their choice, sometimes to even name which side he shall take, rises, arranges himself, and begins. At once he has everything almost equally at command. Recondite meanings of things are suggested to you, and words--what words they are!

> exquisitely chosen and polished.... His preface is to the point, his narrative lucid, his summing up forcible, his rhetorical ornament imposing.... This marvellous faculty he has acquired by dint of great application and practice, for night and day he does nothing, hears nothing, says nothing else. He has passed his sixtieth year and is still only a rhetorician..." (Letters XVIII, to Nepos.)

This emphasis on persuasion and manipulative techniques has continued to today in the refinement of advertising and propaganda methods. A high level of "communication" expertise is shown by the advertisers who develop ads that convince us to purchase their clients' products and the propagandists who convince us to vote for the candidates who employ them or to write to our congressmen about an issue.

Fisher (1981) has described the changes in the emphasis of communication theory from manipulative functions to the role of the receiver. "No longer is communication thought to perform primarily a manipulative function; rather, communication functions to create and maintain some relationship among the interactants. A persuader-persuadee relationship is only one communicative relationship and certainly neither the most important nor the most typical. Communication can involve friendly, egalitarian, reciprocal, complementary, authoritative, marital, familial, and a host of other human relationships" (p. 63).

Although it is not clear where communication studies will go in the next decade, it is apparent that researchers in the area are beginning to focus on the multiple and nonmanipulative aspects of communication as its most important functions.

Methods

Many methods have been used to study communication. The most widespread has been the use of practical experience to produce advice about communication. The

subject of communication has a vast literary tradition, stemming from ancient times, which offers various observations and suggestions from practical experience. In modern times more systematic methods have been developed for the observation and analysis of communication events. Finally, the most current research on communication involves experimental or laboratory studies.

Practical observation. The "method" of observation of practical attempts to produce effective communication has a long history ranging from ancient times to today. Although sometimes using armchair analyses, most writers in this tradition have wide practical experience with what makes communication work. In this sense they are like naturalists who record the facts as they observe them.

Advice about effective communication extends from Isocrates Against the Sophists, Aristotle's Art of Rhetoric, Cicero's De Oratore, through Gracian's Manual, Castiglione's Book of the Courtier, and Chesterfield's Letters. The writers in this tradition suggested a variety of methods to influence one's hearers or to present the most positive and influential image of oneself. The chief goal is to convince others and to obtain political or social favor. Many of the topics have a very modern ring to them--e.g., establishing credibility as a source, arousing emotions for one's side as in propaganda, choosing the most effective sequence of arguments, and supplying evidence or apparent evidence for one's position. Much is made of analyzing the audience or listeners to assess their susceptibility to persuasion and of arranging style and content to meet their particular prejudices.

This literature is limited, of course, by the purposes for which the advice was written and the societies they referred to. For example, Cicero's advice on oratory was designed for those making political appeals in the Roman empire, Gracian wrote for courtiers seeking to make an impression in the Spanish court,

and Chesterfield's letters offered advice to his son about the best way to rise in the eighteenth century British aristocracy. However, because the writers were astute observers of human interaction, these sources deserve some attention. (Of course, they also deserve reading because of their literary merit.)

More recently, a wide variety of books have been written offering advice on methods of influencing others. For example, one of the best selling books of all time was Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People. Other popular works relating to communication include Stuart Chase's The Tyranny of Words, Hayakawa's Language in Thought and Action, Potter's Gamesmanship and Oneupsmanship, Michael Kordya's Power!, Success!, etc. Most of these continue the tradition of manipulation and impression management. They are filled with various strategies and techniques for influencing other people.

For example, Potter's basic semifacetious Oneupsmanship ploys are usually based on the exploitation of the habitual "good manners," "fairness" and "sportsmanship" of the person one is manipulating. For example, the original gambit in gamesmanship is used in tennis when the manipulator simply asks, as the opponent is crossing the court after a point "Kindly say clearly, please, whether the ball was in or out." As Potter points out, "There is nothing more putting off to young university players than a slight suggestion that their etiquette or sportsmanship is in question." The consequence, of course, is that the opponent loses concentration, begins to doubt his or her "fairness," and therefore may award any doubtful point to the original protaganist.

Another approach to communication has been that of helping people express their authentic feelings and working with others on an emotional basis. Many people in our society are less concerned with influencing others than with establishing personal communications with people they care about. These various

"self-help" books offer a wide spectrum of advice relating to the expression of emotions for the purpose of establishing long term intimate relationships.

There is, of course, no evidence that any of these techniques actually result in better communication. However, they are usually derived from practical experience with what works in human communication. However, the method of practical observation is generally atheoretical, and frequently results in "cook book" advice about what to do in a specific situation, which may or may not apply in a given situation. There is also usually no acknowledgment of the limitations and drawbacks of the advice. In general, then, we must look elsewhere for general principles concerning han communication.

Systematic observational methods. Goffman (1959, 1961, 1963, 1972, 1981) is the outstanding observer of the intricacies of communication. His observations are quite perceptive, and ring true, but his ideas are not easily summarized. In general, his ideas are based on the idea that most social encounters are founded on a working consensus as to what the encounter is about, and as to who is dominant and who submissive. The level of intimacy must be agreed on, and the participants must coordinate their patterns of actions and the level of intensity of their emotional responses. Various devices are used, such as physical positioning so that mutual visual inspection is possible, establishing eye contact as a signal that interaction can begin, shaking hands to indicate friendly intent, being "tactful" or pretending nothing has happened if one participant is embarrassed or commits a faux pas, and taking turns in speaking. Goffman also points out how various rituals and social settings influence our behavior, as, for example, when patients are waiting in a doctor's office. He has also attempted to analyze the methods used by people to deal with their own or another's "stigma," such as a physical handicap. His basic unit of analysis has been the single episode

which illustrates these social forms of communication. His basic method is "frame analysis," by means of which he examines the episode for regularities and meanings and asks "What is going on here?" This "snapshot" approach is designed to show how "...we manage ourselves and are managed during episodes of face to face interaction..." (Goffman, 1961).

Discourse analysis. One area that has considerable potential for insights into communication competence is discourse analysis. This field attempts to examine natural language to identify its units, organization, and social functions. As defined by Wesche (1981), discourse analysis is an attempt to identify "... syntactic and semantic constraints and organizational devices at the discourse level which clarify propositional content... [and] underlying regularities in the ordering of the language functions expressed in discourse which are partially determined by constraints such as speaker intention, the roles and relationships of participants and other contextual features" (Wesche, 1981, p. 551). Hatch (1981) has divided research on discourse analysis into roughly six fields. The first involves the analysis of the mechanisms of syntax that make some parts of discourse stand out. The second is the study of the amount of syntactical organization required in discourse of different types; e.g., that required in a formal presentation to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in contrast to unplanned conversations among school children. The third area is the study of large speech events, such as a psychotherapy session. The fourth area is the study of the influence of semantic organization on comprehension and memory. The fifth area has been the analysis of small speech events, such as giving directions, registering complaints, etc.; all of which have their own internal structures. The sixth area is the analysis of discourses between people of unequal power, such as doctors and patients, and teachers and students. Some sources on discourse

analysis include Edmonson (1981), Freedle (1977, 1979), Schenkein (1978), and the series of volumes Syntax and Semantics.

Experimental studies. In recent years, communication has been the subject of a vast literature based on experimental studies. The literature crosses many fields, including sociology, journalism, linguistics, political science, psychology, speech education and psychiatry. It has been summarized in such sources as Miller (1976), Allen and Brown (1976), the yearly editions of the Communication Yearbook, Sage Annual Reviews of Communication Research, Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, Hastie et al. (1980), and Higgins et al. (1980). The studies have focused on many topics and used many different designs, ranging from computerized simulations to studies of the behavior of couples who have been married for many years. They have examined the constructs of control, metacommunication, and contexts, and draw on such diverse sources as the philosophy of language, action theory, cybernetics, and systems thinking. Although very difficult to summarize, the results of these investigations have generally been verified and subject to multiple studies. Thus, although the individual studies often cover rather narrow topics, they are replicable and are based on theoretical constructs. Some of them which have led to ideas about the nature of communication skills will be referred to in the following pages (cf. Berger, 1977; Hewes, 1979; Bochner & Krueger, 1979).

Dimensions of Communication Competence

Many scholars have attempted to isolate the critical dimensions in the capacity to communicate. These scholars have conducted reviews of the literature, syntheses of experimental work, and summaries of pragmatic attempts to provide

education in communication skills. Most of these attempts at analysis have resulted in summaries of evidence, although a few have resulted in attempts at conceptual models.

Wiemann and Backlund (1980) make several helpful suggestions to those studying this area. First, one must not be unrealistic. Since communication includes an incredible variety of behaviors, the student of communication must be pragmatic. "Instead of attempting to directly assess a person's communicative competence in every imaginable situation, one can assess the probability of a person's acting in a competent (appropriate) manner.... Rather than attempt to list all possible behaviors that might be appropriate at some time or other (clearly an impossible task), scholars studying communicative competence have attempted to identify general skill areas--dimensions of competence--in which variations in communicative performance can affect interpersonal effectiveness." p. 192)

Weinstein (1969), who was concerned with the development of interpersonal competence among children, described three basic skills. The first was empathy: the ability to assume the role of the other accurately and to correctly predict the impact of one's own actions on the listener's definition of the situation. Weinstein notes that this skill is what is usually meant by empathy, if we take away the affective overtones of the word. The second "skill" is actually a broad variety of specific interpersonal tactics representing a repertoire of behaviors required in specific social situations such as congratulating someone, or asking for help. The third skill is the judgment necessary to employ the proper tactic in the appropriate situation.

Similarly, Wang, Rose, and Maxwell (1973), who were also concerned with the development of communication skills among children, described four basic skills:

(1) the child's ability to take the listener's role; (2) the child's ability to order and classify relevant information; (3) the child's ability to process feedback information; and (4) the child's ability to provide an appropriate response to the feedback. These two versions of communication competence are based on close study of the development of children.

The next three typologies are based on comprehensive reviews of the literature on communicative competence. Allen and Brown (1976), also interested in children's development, proposed five functions of communication performance: (1) controlling, (2) feeling, (3) informing, (4) ritualizing, and (5) imagining. More specifically, Allen and Brown suggest the following developmental steps (from Larson et al., 1978):

Ages 3-5. The child can:

Code

1. Produce most phonemes accurately.
2. Use morphological rules to express inflection changes.
3. Use the major transformations.

Culture

1. Respond in different manners to a variety of verbal communications.
2. Identify self in communication roles.

Function

1. Integrate verbal and nonverbal strategies.
2. Respond to persuasive probes.
3. Use opinion in conversation to support claims.
4. Communicate referentially with familiar objects and familiar language.
5. Use language to adapt to the listener.
6. "Try on" roles to see what it would be like to be someone else in relationship to another.

Ages 5-11. The child can:

Code

1. Use complex syntactic structures.
2. Produce all phonemes accurately.
3. Recognize semantic nuance, as well as denotation.

Culture

1. Produce bidialectical utterances, if the base dialect is nonstandard.
2. Respond to questions and answers in the classroom in ways appropriate to the dialect of the child's own language community.
3. Respond to status and power relationships in the communication situation.

Function

1. Demonstrate the ability to empathize, both in source and receiver roles.
2. Distinguish, when prompted, another's point of view.
3. Select relevant communication from irrelevant and respond to it accurately.
4. Make abstract and concrete associations.
5. Cast self and others into appropriate interpersonal communication roles and use those roles to further personal goals.
6. Describe, explain, and make inferences regarding unexpressed thoughts, feelings, and intentions of others.
7. Formulate hypotheses and explanations about concrete matters.
8. Create unified dramatic improvisations.

Ages 12-18. The child can:

Code

1. Evaluate emotional states on the basis of verbal and nonverbal communication.

Culture

1. Assume a variety of communication roles in his or her peer culture and language community.
2. Read social-class differences from the nonverbal and verbal communication of others.

Function

1. Analyze persuasive messages in relation to their source.
2. Evaluate a message critically.
3. Play a variety of communication roles: listener, interlocutor, responder, and so on.
4. Select and describe the relevant attributes of a phenomenon or object in such a way as to facilitate understanding or choices for others.
5. Respond to the needs of a listener, in order to make a message comprehensible.
6. Provide feedback and adjust messages as a result of the feedback from others.
7. Predict the potential effectiveness of messages.
8. Provide alternative encodings.
9. Conceptualize his or her own thoughts and the thoughts of others.
10. Reason abstractly.

Weimann (1977) suggested the following model, which had the support of a factor analysis: (1) affiliation/support, (2) empathy, (3) social relaxation, (4) behavioral flexibility, and (5) interaction management.

Larson et al. (1978) suggested five main categories of competence based on an examination of measures of communication competence: (1) appropriateness, (2) listening, (3) nonverbal sensitivity/empathic skills, (4) apprehension/ anxiety, (5) interaction systems. In addition, these scholars included developmental language skills and their correlates, which incorporated disclosure/accessibility, styles and preferences, and attitudes.

Finally, and again as the result of a review of the literature, Weimann and Backlund (1980) isolated three dimensions which consistently appear in research and reviews. The first, and to their minds most crucial, is empathy (including affiliation and support). The second is behavioral flexibility or adaptation. The third is interaction management, which includes the components of control, use of power, and/or general responsiveness to the other.

Four Generic Communication Skills

From these reviews it appears that at least four basic generic communication skills can be identified (although they may be referred to by different names): Listening, Empathy, Non-Verbal Communication, and Expression. The research related to these skills will be examined below.

Listening abilities. Most people think of "communication skills" as those of the effective speaker, the persuasive commentator, or the entertaining teacher. However, as we saw in the review of the models of communication, communication is a two-way process, involving feedback, receiving, filtering and processing each participants' messages. The point is that the effective communicator is as

much a receiver as a sender of messages. The effective communicator gathers information, attends to feedback, assesses information from the sender, and provides feedback. To a considerable extent, the listener controls the process of communication. The importance of listening can be seen in the fact that participants in communicative events spend the majority of their time in listening rather than speaking. And, as emphasized in the models reviewed earlier, listening is not a passive act. It involves sorting stimuli and encoding the message, analyzing the message in terms of the listener's needs, and assessing the speaker's attitudes and internal states. In addition, the listener affects the content, tempo, and style of the interaction. As Larson et al. (1978) put it, "A person who listens closely, attentively, and supportively to someone will develop a much different relationship with that person than will someone who listens in a superficial, closed or critical manner." (p. 49)

Larson et al. go on to distinguish four dimensions in listening: active/passive, social/serious, total or holistic, and inner listening. The active listener is trying to gain as much information as possible in the situation; the passive listener is simply there. Social listening is done for enjoyment, usually in informal settings. It is also used to indicate courtesy, respect and friendship. According to Larson, serious listening is purposeful, is concentrated (the listener attempts to attend to all aspects of the message), is critical or analytic, and is discriminating (the listener seeks to understand and remember). Total or holistic listening means that the listener uses all of his or her senses in an attempt to understand the internal state of the speaker. Inner listening means that the listener is aware of the messages that arise within the self.

There are many barriers to effective listening. One of these, noted in some of the models reviewed earlier, is alienation from the communicator or

the topic. Thus, the listener either concentrates on something unconnected with the message, concentrates almost solely on himself or herself, or is so preoccupied with the details of the interaction itself that he or she does not pay attention to the topic itself. Barber (1971) described some other barriers to effective listening:

1. Considering the topic to be uninteresting.
2. Concentrating on the speaker's delivery rather than the message.
3. Becoming emotionally involved with the message or the speaker.
4. Listening only for facts rather than the total message.
5. Thinking of answers to questions or points before fully understanding them.
6. Processing information at the speed of speech rather than the speed of thought.
7. Being distracted.
8. Pretending to be attentive when one is not.
9. Concentrating on what is easy to understand.
10. Overreacting to words; allowing their emotional connotations to dictate what is heard.
11. Reacting to the message in terms of one's own prejudicies or beliefs.

Similar lists have been provided by other authors, and they typically emphasize that poor listeners often modify messages so they are similar to past ones, or modify the intent or content of the message so it is congruent with their expectations. Poor listeners will also alter messages so that they are consistent with their own opinions or those of others in a group. Finally, they react to messages in categorical terms of good or bad, wrong or right, etc., rather than attending to the substance of the message.

Other writers have suggested behaviors that should improve an individual's listening skills. Generally these authors suggest tactics such as the following (taken from Barbara, 1958; Barber, 1971; Egan, 1970; and Weaver, 1972).

1. Be ready to listen; concentrate on the speaker's content and style; think about the message.
2. Attempt to anticipate the content and issues involved and the speaker's intent or purpose.
3. Identify your own reasons for interest in the topic or purposes in listening.
4. Listen for the main ideas and issues; listen for evidence for the speaker's views.
5. Examine the speaker's use of words: Are the referents the same as yours? Do they have some emotional meaning to the speaker? Do they arouse emotions in you?
6. Become aware of your own biases and attitudes.
7. Attempt to compensate for words or ideas that arouse your own feelings by deferring judgment; empathize with the speaker.
8. Be flexible in your attitudes.
9. Help the speaker by providing feedback about your understanding of the content or about how your feelings are being affected. (This last is best done in a nonadversarial way [Larson, 1976]).

From these lists, it is easy to construct a picture of an effective listener: alert, prepared, attentive, aware of the situation, aware of his own and the speaker's purposes and possible biases, ready to defer judgment and listen for evidence, able to articulate his or her own understanding and reactions, and capable of compensating for emotional reactions to words or ideas. However, it

should be noted that there is very little solid or consistent research to support these ideas, as sensible as they may seem. In addition, there is, as Larson et al. (1978) have noted, very little agreement in the literature about almost any aspect of the listening process.

First, the attempts to define, let alone assess listening ability have been, on the whole, unsuccessful. The tests that have been designed to assess listening ability have shown inadequate validity, and are confounded by the fact that they require expressive responses. Second, it is unclear whether listening ability is a single ability or a group of abilities, and it is unclear where listening leaves off and other abilities or influences come into play. For example, knowledge is clearly important in listening. A listener without a background in, say, physics, is unlikely to comprehend very much in a conversation among physicists. More generally, it seems likely that the quality of listening will depend to some extent on the vocabulary level and range of experiences of the listener. In general, it seems plausible to expect overall listening capability to increase with breadth of vocabulary and experience. Another consideration is the cultural background of the speaker and listener. Knowledge of the appropriateness of various kinds of behaviors and manners of speaking is very important. As one example, there is a small literature on what constitutes the "appropriate" distance between speakers in different cultures. Another example is touch. Among some groups, such as Italians, touch is routine and to some extent expected. Among Chinese, however, touch is not only rude, but considered a violation of the person's space. Even the use of words is important. For example, consider the Yiddish word "mish-mosh"--a mixup, a mess, confusion. Leo Rosten tells the story of a Congressman on one of Groucho Marx's <u>You Bet Your Life</u> television shows who said "mish-mash." Groucho gave him a startled stare

and remarked, "You'll never get votes in the Bronx if you go on saying mish-mash instead of mish-mosh." Rosten claims no Jew ever says "mish-mash."

Third, and as one would expect from the foregoing, the attempts to train people to be better listeners have met with mixed success at best. And, if a program does have some success, it is unclear which part of the program led to the result.

However, despite these difficulties, it is clear that listening ability is an important part of the communication process. Perhaps the most sensible procedure is to follow Larson et al. (1978) and conceive of listening ability as a global capability and attempt to identify and study manageable parts of that capability. It should be possible to develop valid assessments of listening ability in certain situations or fields, such as business meetings.

Emphatic Skills

Empathy is clearly related to listening; an individual cannot be a good listener without some degree of empathy and an individual cannot be empathetic without some ability to listen. Obviously, empathy and listening involve many of the same skills and traits. However, the literature on listening tends to emphasize obtaining the content or information in a message, whereas the literature on empathy emphasizes understanding other people's feelings, reactions, or attitudes. This distinction is serviceable and helps to sort out the evidence on communication skills, although it is plain that most messages are a combination of information and feelings.

Another important distinction is that between sympathy and empathy. Sympathy usually refers to having the same feelings as the speaker, experiencing the same things another experiences. Empathy refers to the accurate judgment of

one person's feelings or attitudes by another person. Obviously, empathy and sympathy are part of the same process, but it is useful to distinguish them. Studies of empathy have frequently been conducted by social psychologists examining interpersonal perception, person perception, social perception, etc., where the emphasis is on the accuracy of the perception.

People can be accurate about other's behaviors or attitudes for two reasons: general social or subgroup norms that apply to typical or average responses of members of the society or subgroup, and sensitivity to individual's feelings and dispositions. For example, it is easy to predict the behavior of a college student listening to a professor's lecture, or the responses of church goers at a Catholic Mass. It is also fairly easy to predict the responses of one's uncle from rural Maine. A surprising degree of accuracy can be reached by many observers with the simple knowledge of another's age, sex, race, education, residence, occupation, and location (e.g., in an office, at a baseball game, etc.)--only seven elements of information.

Personal accuracy depends on attention to the personal and interpersonal clues provided by the other. Accuracy in this sense depends on sensitivity to the other's internal state. One danger is the tendency toward projection, where one assumes the other person is like oneself, or is "average" like oneself. Duck (1973) conducted some experiments and found that the overwhelming majority of errors in interpersonal perception were due to a judge assuming a similarity between himself or herself and the speaker when no real similarity existed. Obviously, any attempt to assess empathic ability needs to eliminate, or at least assess this projective bias.

A widely cited paradigm for the assessment of empathic ability was put forward in 1965 by Hobart and Fahlberg. The essentials of this paradigm are shown in Figure 3. In this model, empathy--or accuracy--is demonstrated most convincingly when the judge and the target are dissimilar and the judgments are accurate. Larson et al. (1978) cite several measures based on this model that have been developed for use in organizational settings and for studying parent-child relationships.

Nonverbal Communication Skills

There have been a wide variety of books written about nonverbal communication in the last several years, ranging from popular treatments to research monographs. These include Bauml and Bauml's A dictionary of gestures (1975), Dittmann's Interpersonal messages of emotion (1972), Ekman's Unmasking the face (1975), Henley's Body politics: Power, sex and nonverbal communication (1977), Hess' The tell-tale eye, Izard's The face of emotion (1971), Mehrabian's Nonverbal communication (1972), Wylie and Stafford's Beaux Gestes: A guide to French body talk (1977), and DePaulo and Rosenthal's Skill in nonverbal communication: Individual differences (1979). Although the emphases of these books varied, they suggest the importance of distinguishing between decoding skills, or the ability to "read" cues from others, and encoding skills, or the ability to express cues to aid the communication process.

The popular books suggest that one can fairly easily "read" another's feelings by watching for certain signs (decoding), and can convey one's own viewpoints much more effectively by using certain gestures or movements (encoding). The experimental literature suggests that it is much more difficult to interpret or "translate" so-called body language than these books suggest. First, the

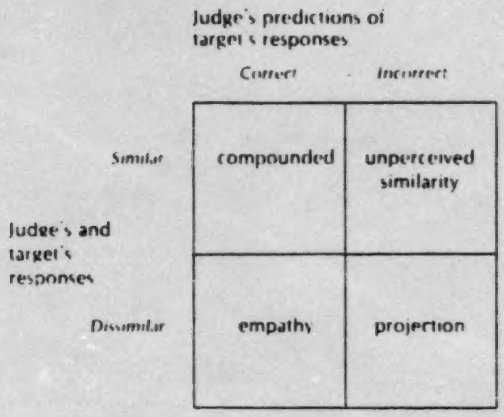

Fig. 3. Hobart and Fahlberg's Empathic Ability Paradigm

verbal aspect of communication is much more important than the nonverbal in most interactions. The content, tone, and manner of speaking convey most of the message. Second, it is difficult to see, let alone record, what is going on nonverbally. Various systems that have been developed include Birdwhistle's system of recording "kinesics" or body movement, Hall's system of "proxemics" or the way people structure space around them, and Condon and Ogston's study of the movements of normal and psychiatrically pathological patients. These systems have used a variety of methods, including raters, photographs, filmed interactions, and slow motion film. Although some of these measures have adequate reliability, their validity is generally marginal.

The critical question is whether "nonverbal" communication is generalizable to other kinds of communication--and whether there is a single global ability or several in nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal decoding skills are an important part of communication competence. Some researchers have suggested that there is a general factor or underlying ability in this area. For example, Beldock (1964) found positive interrelations among the abilities to recognize emotions as presented vocally, graphically and musically. Levy (1964) found positive relations between the ability to identify others' emotions and the ability to identify one's own emotions. Cunningham (1977) found evidence for positive relationships among the abilities to identify nonverbal cues communicated by tone of voice, body or face, and between the ability to identify spontaneously expressed emotions and the ability to identify posed emotions.

The most extensive research on nonverbal communication was conducted by DePaulo and Rosenthal (1979). These researchrs described studies that examined the ability to identify the emotions expressed in twenty different situations.

They found that the structure of these abilities becomes more differentiated with increasing age. In another study, Rosenthal et al. (1979) factor-analyzed skills in decoding emotions expressed nonverbally through different channels. They found a "face" factor, a "body" factor and two separate "tone" factors. The same investigators also examined the ability to judge discrepant and mixed cues, and concluded that "...skill at judging inconsistent cues seems to be a different kind of skill than the ability to judge consistent cues....our factor analysis also suggested that the audio-video distinction is an important one. Two of our factors were all audio-video factors, and the other two were primarily audio factors."

One might expect people who are capable of decoding the nonverbal cues of others to be able to encode their own cues more capably than other people. It is true that the various encoding skills are interrelated (DePaulo and Rosenthal found a median correlation of .45 among measures of encoding skills) and that decoding skills are related (they found a median correlation of .50 among measures of decoding skills). However, across 17 studies the correlation between encoding and decoding skills ranged from -.80 to +.65, with a median of .16. In addition factor analytic evidence suggests that encoding and decoding skills are distinct and separate.

Given this general lack of relationship, DePaulo and Rosenthal investigated the personalities of people who were particularly good at expressing their emotions and those who were especially good at judging the feelings of others. After administering a battery of personality tests the investigators identified several patterns:

"...people's perceptions of their own personalities seem to predict profiles of communication skills in intriguingly plausible ways.

> For instance, people who describe themselves as outgoing, gregarious, and physically attractive are especially skilled at both encoding and decoding interpersonal affects. Those who seem themselves as persuasive and influential seem to show a more specialized skill structure: they have especially impressive encoding (compared to decoding) skills. People who shy away from potentially disconcerting social situations are especially unlikely to encode well potentially disconcerting (i.e., discrepant) cues, and people who have a view of human nature as complex communicate complex emotions relatively more effectively than pure ones." (p. 238)

Finally, DePaulo and Rosenthal found that people are very poor judges of their own ability to decode or interpret nonverbal cues from others. "Years of asking people who have taken [a test of nonverbal decoding] whether they are skilled judges of nonverbal cues produced a median correlation of .08 between self-rated accuracy and actual accuracy" (p. 239). However, people who thought they were good at encoding tend to actually be good encoders.

In summary, nonverbal communication skills are complex and quite differentiated. Good decoders are not especially likely to be good encoders, and people who are good in one channel, e.g., audio, are not necessarily good in another. However, the importance of nonverbal behavior in overall communication effectiveness is obvious, and the difficulties in assessing the skills involved should not blind us to their significance.

Expressive Communication Skills

Expressive skills are the subject of a great many texts and course books in such subjects as speech, rhetoric, and communication skills. These various

texts emphasize the use of proper English, dramatizing one's points, organization, analyzing the audience, etc.

The elements of effective formal expressive communication include the general strategies of using an organized presentation, e.g., stating a thesis, specifying, clarifying, using causal arguments, using examples, comparing, using analogies, and contrasting. More specific techniques include the use of detailed versus general statements, choosing effective details, preparing a complete and unified presentation, presenting an orderly movement of ideas, finding appropriate and effective words, being sensitive to the connotations as well as the denotations of words, using allusions and similies, and choosing a style (formal, informal, colloquial). The use of argument and persuasion depend on stating or recognizing one's assumptions or premises, using induction, generalizing, using causal thinking, using correlation, using analogy, using deduction, and avoiding various logical fallacies. (Of course, we should remember that propagandists and advertisers--successful communicators of a sort--use such logically fallacious techniques as glittering generalities, testimonials, card stacking, and scapegoating.)

The most comprehensive efforts at defining expressive communication skills have been conducted by educators attempting to set standards for minimal or higher level competence. These standards will be described since they form a picture of what well-informed educators and researchers believe is involved in communication competence. Although these standards also include listening standards, only the expressive standards will be discussed here. One of the most thorough examinations was carried out by Backlund et al. (1982), who conducted a critical examination of the literature, current practices in the states, and existing instruments. On the basis of this review of efforts to assess communication skills, the investigators made a number of recommendations for procedures

and techniques to assess communication skills. These recommendations are described in some detail below, because they highlight some of the difficulties faced by those attempting to assess communication skills in realistic situations.

1. Assessment of students should occur in naturalistic rather than contrived situations. Some examples of these situations include asking and giving straightforward information; describing a situation to another person; questioning another's viewpoint; using survival words (e.g., if the speaker smells smoke in school); and speaking so the listener understands the speaker's purpose.
2. Assessment of students should involve observations by classroom teachers. However, only teachers who have been trained in using, scoring, and interpreting the rating scale should be responsible for assessment.
3. The assessment should be a rating grade with features such as the following;

   The scale should reflect principal domains or factors that represent given specific dimensions of communication skills.

   Scales for <u>delivery</u> should range from items such as "Speaker responds with appropriate volume, rate, and distinctness, creating an impression of poise" to "Speaker responds in a distracting fashion with inappropriate volume, rate, and clarity."

   Scales for <u>languge</u> should range from "Speaker is consistently intelligible; always uses words and phrases in standard English, creating an impression of fluency" to "Speaker is barely intelligible; seldom uses words and phrases in standard English usage and shows stress in choosing words."

   Scales for <u>organization</u> should range from "Speaker organizes and states message clearly with good supporting detail" to "Speaker demon-

strates little or no organization; message lacks order and supporting detail."

Scales for purpose should range from "Speaker responds directly and clearly to the purpose indicated by the situation; message contains required information" to "Speaker responds with little or no awareness of or connection to the purpose indicated by the situation."

4. While the instrument is being developed, assessment should demonstrate inter-rater reliability.
5. A validation study should be conducted when the instrument is first being developed, e.g., by showing that scores increase with age.

Using these recommendations, the State Board of Education of Massachusetts set forth a list of thirteen speaking skills that "...must be included in basic skills improvement programs throughout the Commonwealth." These skills are as follows:

(a) Basic Oral Communication Skills

1. Use words and phrases appropriate to the situation
2. Speak loudly enough to be heard by a listener or group of listeners
3. Speak at a rate the listener can understand
4. Say words distinctly

(b) Planning, Developing and Stating Spoken Messages

1. Use words in an order that clearly expresses the thought
2. Organize main ideas for presentation
3. State main ideas clearly
4. Support main ideas with important details

(c) Common Uses of Spoken Messages

1. Use survival words to cope with emergency situations
2. Speak so listener understands purpose
3. Ask for and give straightforward information
4. Describe objects, events and experiences
5. Question others' viewpoints.

Obviously, these skills are minimal; they do not reach the level most people associate with a highly effective communicator. However, Rubin (1982) has examined skills in speaking and listening at the college level, in an attempt to develop an instrument designed to assess communication competence, and reached fairly similar conclusions. After reviewing investigations into qualities of interpersonal communication competence (Bochner & Kelley, 1974; Weimann, 1977; Kelley, Chase, & Wiemann, 1979; Harris & Cronen, 1979), Rubin concluded that the assessment of competence must be based on the situation, but should focus on the skills necessary for survival in society. Then, after examining available tests of speaking and listening skills, Rubin developed the CCAI (Communication Competency Assessment Instrument), which requires students to present a 3-minute extemporaneous persuasive talk on a topic of interest during which six judgments about the student's speaking ability are made. Then the student views a videotaped six and one-half minute representation of a class lecture and is asked questions about the lecture. Finally, the student is asked to respond in various ways to statements about experiences he or she has had in an educational environment. The scoring includes assessments of the following expressive skills:

I. Use of Communication Codes

A. Use Words, Pronunciation and Grammar Appropriate for the Situation.

1. Use appropriate language

2. Use appropriate grammar

3. Use pronunciation which is understood by others

B. Use Nonverbal Signs Appropriate for the Situation

1. Use appropriate gestures and eye contact when interacting with others

2. Recognize and/or use appropriate gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions when communicating understanding or lack of understanding in a listening situation

C. Use Voice Effectively

1. Use appropriate rate

2. Speak loudly enough

3. Use appropriate clarity

II. Oral Message Evaluation

A. Identify Main Ideas in Messages

B. Distinguish Facts From Opinions

C. Distinguish Between Informative and Persuasive Messages

D. Recognize When Another Does Not Understand Your Message

III. Basic Speech Communication Skills

A. Express Ideas Clearly and Concisely

B. Express and Defend With Evidence Your Point of View

C. Organize (order) Messages So That Others Can Understand Them

D. Ask Questions to Obtain Information

E. Answer Questions Effectively

F. Give Concise and Accurate Directions

G. Summarize Messages

IV. Human Relations

A. Describe Another's Viewpoint

1. Describe the viewpoint of one who disagrees with you

2. Describe the viewpoint of one who agrees with you

B. Describe Differences in Opinion

C. Express Feelings to Others

1. Express satisfaction or dissatisfaction

2. Express empathy

D. Perform Social Rituals

1. Introduce yourself

2. Request an appointment

3. Conclude a conversation

The initial instrument had a coefficient alpha of .82, and the ultimate version had a coefficient alpha of .78. In addition, students with various characteristics scored higher: humanities majors, students with more than 60 credits, older students, students with high grades, and students with a great deal of speaking experience.

The two examples of setting standards reviewed here are probably the best defined, most realistically assessed and most psychometrically sound of the assessments of expressive communication competence. The expressive skills may be oriented toward behaviors that can be observed in classrooms, but they appear to have reasonable generality. Everyone has known someone who can express his or her ideas clearly and concisely, whether by "natural talent" or hard-won skill. Similarly, everyone has known people who simply do not understand that realistic evidence is needed to support one's viewpoint. And almost everyone has appreciated a person who was able to offer them clear and accurate directions or

instructions and cursed the person who has given them garbled and inaccurate directions or instructions. The chief concern for this review is the degree to which the areas of these criteria of minimal standards can be considered to represent areas or dimensions of generic skill in communication. There is, in fact, considerable overlap in the definitions, most of which are suggested in the Rubin description. It is suggested that further research be conducted to see to what extent hierarchies of expressive skills can be developed in each of the areas of standards outlined which would demonstrate levels of effective expressive communication skill.

Similar problems are faced by educators who teach a second language to non-speakers. That is, they also need to assess the communicative competence of their students or of the applicants to their institutions in naturalistic settings. They recognize that paper and pencil exercises cannot adequately demonstrate the skills of their students in real interactions with native speakers (Wesche, 1981). Readers interested in the theoretical basis of this work are referred to Canale and Swain, 1980; Carroll, 1980; Clark, 1978; and Hymes, 1972. Although the theories behind these approaches are stimulating, their chief value is their pragmatic attempts to assess real life competence in ordinary interactions. The first step, as described by Carroll (1980), is to determine the learner or examinee's second language needs. For example, a prospective interpreter may have very different needs than someone working in a chemistry laboratory. Analysis then proceeds to examine the purpose of the interactions, the situational aspects, the types of discourse which would be appropriate, the degree of skill expected, the language forms needed, and the kinds of authentic materials and interactions with native speakers that would expose the learner or examinee to appropriate forms. In addition to linguistic and socially appropriate usage,

speakers of a second language use various compensatory strategies, such as inferring from context, paraphrasing, asking for repetition, and using gestures (Canale & Swain, 1980). These strategies also need to be assessed.

Researchers in this area have had to wrestle with several issues that apply to any assessment of expressive communicative competence. The first is generalizability, or the extent to which performance in one situation is generalizable to another situation. As Wesche puts it "Does the learner's ability to ask for information at the train station tell us anything about his or her ability to participate in a social gathering or read a newspaper?" (p. 559) Thus, learners or examinees need to be assessed for both the grammatical and the sociolinguistic appropriateness of their performance in a variety of common situations. The assessment should be as directly related to realistic tasks as possible. From this it follows that the assessment should be criterion referenced rather than being based on comparisons with other examinees. Of course the assessment should be reliable and feasible.

Although no existing instrument meets all of these criteria, several attempts are quite promising. For example, the CITO Functional Dialogue Language Tests were developed to assess the oral proficiency of Dutch secondary school students in French, German or English. It focuses on three areas: situations, themes, and stereotyped social speech acts. Situations include dealing with a receptionist, shopping, dealing with police, etc. The functions of language, such as asking for information, persuading, etc., are specified. An examiner plays the role of receptionist, shop clerk, policeman, etc. Themes include providing personal data, appropriate behavior on holidays, etc. Social speech acts include greeting, introducing oneself, thanking, taking one's leave, etc. Although the reliability and concurrent or predictive validity of this instrument

remain to be demonstrated, it has a great deal of face validity. Wesche (1980) has reviewed several similar tests.

Although these instruments are obviously set at a very basic level, the considerations that went into their construction apply to other attempts to assess expressive skill, and communicative competence in general. The first consideration in any attempt at assessment is the generalizability of the tasks. That is, even the number of types of communication situations is staggering. How can we know that the situations chosen for an assessment of communication skills accurately sample the domain of skill we are interested in? Some reflection on this question suggests that any global assessment of communicative skills is probably impossible, and, in any case, would probably not be very useful. It would probably be much more useful to use Carroll's strategy of defining the needs of people in particular roles or situations. For example, it might be helpful to attempt to define the communication skills needed to conduct a variety of business meetings. The tasks should have authenticity; i.e., clearly and realistically represent the target behavior. A variety of communication functions, both verbal and nonverbal, should be assessed. And, of course, the tests should be reliable and feasible. Ideally, they would elicite the expression of the behavior to be assessed, rather than simply asking the examinee to select the most appropriate response from a set of options. However, this procedure would involve an almost clinical assessment of the responses of the examinee which are, by their very nature, unpredictable. Thus, some sort of compromise would need to worked out to make such assessments feasible.

Conclusions

The communication models we reviewed suggested that a comprehensive view of communication can exist, and, at least implicitly, that there is a set of

skills that would lead to effective communication. They also suggested that certain variables influence communication. For example, the concept of "feedback" underlines the importance of listening and of providing reflective responses for effective communication. The review of the methods used to study communication did not lead to such conclusions so readily, but did suggest the complexities of the communication situation and the multiple influences on the communication process. The reviews of communication competence reached varied conclusions, but, in general, seemed to center on at least four general skills, although they were referred to by different names. These four skills were reviewed in the next section. Listening is a critical skill, but the research concerning it is spotty, and attempts to assess the skill have had poor success. Empathy, which, stripped of its affective connotations simply refers to the accurate perception of others, is important in most conceptions of human communication. Some tests and experimental tasks seem to assess this skill. Nonverbal communication is actually a group of interrelated skills, depending on the channel (voice, movement, etc.). However, decoding or interpretive skills do not appear to be related to encoding or expressive skills. Finally, expressive skills have been defined from a variety of perspectives and assessed, at least at somewhat elementary levels, with some success.

All of these areas are the subjects of intense continued research. Although the skills we have identified appear plausible, and are also part of many conceptions and reviews of the communication process, continued research is clearly required. The key problem is to assess these skills reliably in naturalistic settings. A great variety of approaches relating to this assessment have been reviewed in the preceding pages, and each of them have added to our understanding. However, none of them accounts fully for the process of communication. The many facets of communication leave substantial problems for continued experimentation and theorizing.

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